Your diversity journey goes beyond tick box

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognise, accept, and celebrate those differences." A poignant and succinct remark by Audre Lorde, black American writer, feminist and civil rights activist. It is also a sentiment that both resonates and transcends Heritage Month; unity is found within diversity.

When different people come together, unique and innovative ideas and perspectives are fostered. From an organisational point of view, the more diverse your team the greater potential for creative, innovative, and solution-orientated thinking.

Diversity and inclusion go beyond recognising differences in race, gender, or culture; it's about truly understanding people on a deeper level. When you have a better understanding of others, you can build closer and more effective relationships. This, in turn, enhances teamwork.

Establishing a DNA of diversity, inclusivity, and transformation

Growing an organisation that really understands and fosters diversity, equity and inclusion requires dedication. It is an ever-prevailing goal that extends beyond mandates and diversity-related initiatives.

To establish the above, a fair amount of work needs to go into educating people; fostering a growth mindset that embraces change, allowing employees to step out of comfort zones, and engage in difficult conversations. Respecting different opinions is an important part of this growth process.

Transforming an organisation to embrace diversity and inclusion involves several crucial steps:

What are your company's core value**s?** Once you've established it, ensure that it explicitly emphasises diversity, equity, and inclusion. These values should not live on paper but become the guiding principles

of an organisation's culture.

Leadership commitment sets the tone. Leaders must demonstrate a genuine commitment to a company's core values; leading by example is a solid foundation for others to follow.

Designated responsibility – companies should appoint individuals to drive transformation and diversity and inclusion efforts. This role should ensure that these initiatives are not just a matter of meeting regulatory requirements but become ingrained in the organisational culture.

Performance appraisals should incorporate diversity and inclusion metrics. This ensures that employees are evaluated based on their commitment to these values. It will reinforce the importance of diversity and inclusion in the organisation.

Education and awareness must be driven by tailored programmes that address biases, stereotypes, and prejudices (conscious or unconscious) that individuals may hold. It's essential to create a safe space for employees to reflect on their biases and learn how to rectify it.

Consider establishing programmes that champion diversity, equity, and inclusion and appoint champions who can, in turn, actively promote inclusion within their teams, creating a cascading effect throughout the organisation.

Transparency – be transparent about your diversity and inclusion efforts. Share progress, successes, and challenges openly with employees.

Employee engagement – encourage open conversations about diversity and inclusion. Also, create platforms where employees can share their experiences, concerns, and suggestions. This engagement fosters a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Continuous improvement– it's important to recognise that diversity and inclusion efforts are ongoing. Regularly evaluate and refine your strategies based on feedback and evolving best practices.

The above nine points will provide organisations with important steps to create a culture that not only values diversity, equity and inclusion but actively works to integrate them into everyday practices and behaviours.

At Schneider Electric, we place a strong focus on understanding and learning from the various cultures within our organisations. One of our core company values, which we wholeheartedly embrace is, #Embracedifferent.

Our commitment to this value isn't limited to Heritage Month alone. We actively foster it through our various programmes. Ultimately, these initiatives focus on appreciating the diverse personalities within our teams, transcending considerations of heritage, culture, and gender.